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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8357th meeting
Thursday, 20 September 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cohen	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Michon
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 20 August 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/778)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 20 August 2018 from the secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/778)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/778, which contains the text of a letter dated 20 August from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the continued support of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, specifically as per the Council's request to inform it on the progress made by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan towards implementing the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2412 (2018). I would also like to briefly elaborate on the Secretary-General's recommendations to reconfigure UNISFA, as submitted in his letter of 20 August (S/2018/778).

With regard to the first benchmark, which is facilitating the full freedom of movement, the Sudan and South Sudan maintained standing clearance for all UNISFA air and ground patrols within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. Since March, both countries have authorized their senior national monitors based at the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli to provide approval. Consequently, all patrols undertaken by UNISFA since April have received approval without delay.

On the second benchmark, which is finalizing the agreement on the four Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism team sites, UNISFA continues to operate a team site at Tishwin/Panakuac within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, and efforts continued within the reporting period to establish the other three team sites. The ad hoc committee for the 14 Mile Area met on 28 August, when the South Sudanese delegation stated that it was unable to convince local leaders to allow the establishment of the tweam sites in Safahah/Kiir Adem and As Sumayah/Wierayen. As a result, the committee recommended that the matter be referred to the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. With regard to the establishment of the fourth team site in the Abu Qussa/Wunkur area, the decision remains with the Joint Political and Security Mechanism to consider an alternative location due to the presence of rebel entities.

Despite the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to convene meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism within the reporting period — which is the third benchmark — the three scheduled meetings were postponed by the parties. The meeting to be held on 11 and 12 August and the subsequent meeting scheduled for 6 and 7 September were postponed to accommodate talks between the South Sudanese parties in Khartoum and subsequent consultations on the agreement reached on 30 August. The meeting scheduled for 17 and 18 September was postponed by the Sudan due to prior commitments of the Government. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel has scheduled the next meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism for 23 September.

With regard to advancing the establishment of the border-crossing corridors — which are the fourth and fifth benchmarks — progress remains contingent on parties undertaking sensitization exercises with their border communities. Sensitization efforts are necessary to allay the concerns of the border communities, while emphasizing that in no way do the marking of border-crossing corridors and Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations prejudice the current or future legal status of the border. The upcoming meeting of the Joint Political and Security

Mechanism is expected to address sensitization issues with the border communities.

Lastly, the African Union Border Programme convened the Joint Demarcation Committee — which is the sixth benchmark — from 10 to 13 September, in order to resume border demarcation discussions. However the parties were unable to advance their discussions on the boundary delimitation document, which would guide the demarcation exercise. Progress on that document stalled in 2017. The Joint Border Commission is scheduled to meet in October.

Despite only partial completion of the conditions contained in resolution 2412 (2018), the past few months witnessed a number of other positive developments in the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan, not least among them the efforts undertaken by the Sudan in facilitating talks between the South Sudanese parties in Khartoum. Building on this promising collaboration between the parties, I call on the Council to consider the reconfiguration recommendations outlined by the Secretary-General in his letter of 20 August to adjust UNISFA to the current realities so as to best support both Governments in their efforts to implement their agreements.

Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations have markedly increased and picked up momentum within the past year due to the proactive push by the Security Council and UNISFA to further activities, including the establishment of team sites. The Border Monitoring Mechanism remains a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the two countries and its normalization. It is in this regard that I request the Council to consider the recommendation in the Secretary-General's letter and allow for a modest adjustment in UNISFA's mandate on the Mechanism, within current resources. This would provide the Mission with the ability to better support border-demarcation efforts by the African Union border programme, including the much-needed sensitization of the border communities that I highlighted earlier. The recommendations envisage the establishment of two further sector headquarters and team sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, as required, to provide more comprehensive coverage of the border region. Troops would be transferred from the Abyei area to achieve full operating capability for the Border Monitoring Mechanism. This would harmonize the diminishing military threat with the corresponding reduction in military need for the Abyei area.

With regard to the Abyei area, the military component of the Mission would concentrate its deployments along the borders of the area to safeguard against armed incursions. With criminality increasing in the Abyei area, the recommendations call for the deployment of three formed police units and additional specialized individual police officers to enhance the Mission's focus on maintaining law and order and continue furthering peace between the local communities. These proposed changes are accommodated within the current uniformed personnel ceiling of 4,550. Extensive consultations were undertaken by the Secretariat with the parties and the African Union to formulate these recommendations, which endeavour to match the situation on the ground by reducing troops from the Abyei area, introducing police to manage law and order, and enhancing the Mission's mandate to seize and advance progress on the Border Monitoring Mechanism, as well as to operationally support the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in its political efforts. The further engagement of the Council with the parties is necessary to agree on a mandate for UNISFA that would serve the parties as well as their border communities.

In closing, let me reiterate that it is imperative that all peacekeeping missions address the changing needs on the ground and work towards achieving a political resolution. In the case of UNISFA, the support to the implementation of the 2012 cooperation agreements and the resolution of the status of Abyei and of the border needs to be reframed in such a way as to enable the parties to make meaningful progress. The Secretary-General's letter outlines recommendations that aim to achieve that goal.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council during its deliberations on the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

I shall confine my remarks to the question of progress in regard to negotiations between the Sudan and South Sudan on the final status of Abyei. It is the resolution of this issue above all else that would allow for a timely exit by UNISFA from Abyei.

As Council members will recall, the African Union High-level Panel, under the chairmanship of

President Mbeki, has considered this question and, in 2013, formulated a proposal to resolve the question of the status of Abyei by means of a referendum. Its proposal, including modalities for such a referendum, was considered and then adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council in 2013. The Sudan opposed the proposal and no further action has been taken to this day. Indeed, in 2014 the Abyei file in each country was transferred to the offices of President Omar Al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir. Since then, notwithstanding occasional meetings between the Presidents over the past five years, the invitation to include Abyei on the agenda of such meetings has been consistently declined by the two principals.

The eruption of civil conflict in South Sudan in 2013 and again in 2016 has seen the issue of Abyei relegated to the sidelines. The two countries' internal predicaments have precluded a discussion on this matter, not least because of the mutual recriminations between them regarding allegations of their support for the respective internal insurgencies in their countries. South Sudan, in particular, was not in a position to drive negotiations on this difficult topic, given the imbalance of power between the two countries. The prevailing tensions between the two countries impacted down the chain of authority. The regularity and tone of meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee intended to deal with the interim administration of the Abyei box reflected this combative approach. The Juba delegation insisted that the Oversight Committee was not empowered to deal with matters relating to the joint administration of the territory.

We now believe that there is good reason to hope that the parties' reluctance to deal with the final-status issue and even the interim administration issues will change. In the past few months, we have seen a remarkable shift in the willingness of the States of the Horn of Africa region to engage neighbours with which they had long-held hostile relations or even open conflict. The rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea has triggered if not the resolution of disputes between the States of the region, then at least a willingness to engage each other to seek solutions. There is now pervasive peer pressure to deal with the conflicts that beset the region, hold back its development and economic integration, or exacerbate political instability in the Horn of Africa. This shift is nowhere better represented than by the efforts of Khatroum to mediate an agreement between the competing parties in the civil conflict in South Sudan.

Sudan has insisted that it is acting in the interests of peace in the region and the building of good-neighbourly relations with South Sudan. Its endeavours have been publicly appreciated by Juba and the other signatory parties of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. There is no doubt that the successful mediation by the Sudan of the outstanding issues in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development peace process has contributed to reducing tensions between Juba and Khartoum. It is notable that part of the agreement is concerned with building a concrete modality of cooperation between the two countries specifically on the rehabilitation of oil fields in Unity state. In my engagements with the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan, I have encouraged them to extend their cooperation in the oil sector to intensified engagements in other fields of mutual benefit. It also seems that the reduction in intensity of both countries' internal civil conflicts, particularly in South Sudan, may enable consideration of a solution to this question as well as the other matters covered in the mutually agreed cooperation agreements.

The new mood has enabled eminent personalities concerned with Abyei, including former Foreign Minister Francis Deng, to generate an informal series of discussions in Khatroum. Their aim is to identify a road map that would rejuvenate cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya and and open a window to discuss the final status of Abyei. It is the first time since 2012, when the Presidents took responsibility for handling the Abyei issue, that it has been possible for the Abyei lobbyists in both countries to undertake direct discussions on this sensitive matter.

The more positive posture between the two countries has encouraged the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to invite the two Foreign Ministers, Deng Alor Kwol and Eldirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, for discussions on Abyei's final status next week. That meeting was intended to take place on the sidelines of an extraordinary session of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. I personally engaged the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs to assess their willingness to engage on this issue and to confirm that the timing for such a discussion was appropriate. They were positive while being clear not to overpromise on a successful outcome. We have just heard that both

Governments have now declined the offer to discuss it on the margins of the Mechanism meeting scheduled for 23 and 24 September, but this is most likely because of the unavailability of the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, owing to their presence here in New York. I remain hopeful, however, that such an engagement will indeed take place. Even if it only serves to put the issue of Abyei's final status on the agenda, it would be a positive move.

Against that backdrop, on two related issues, I can confirm first that, in regard to the Secretary-General's proposal on UNISFA, I believe that the provision of political depth to the UNISFA mission will enable it to better manage the intercommunal relations in Abyei and the adjacent border areas, pending a final solution. Secondly, I can confirm that both the Sudan and South Sudan acknowledge that UNISFA has indisputably contributed to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Area, including through intercommunal dialogue, and that it has prevented a relapse into conflict in Abyei and consequently between the two countries.

The President: I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): Allow me to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for their briefings. I also take this opportunity to say how much we have appreciated Mr. Haysom's dedicated efforts and contributions on the issue of Abyei over the past two years.

We are pleased to note once again that the security situation in Abyei remains generally stable. Indeed, Abyei has become a vibrant hub between the Sudan and South Sudan and an area of sanctuary for refugees coming from various communities. That is a direct result of the stability created by the presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in the area. It is a stark contrast to the situation of six or seven years ago, and UNISFA deserves to be commended for what it has been able to accomplish — essentially, maintaining a peaceful and stable situation in the Abyei Area.

That, however, should not lead us to let down our guard. We can have no doubt that the continued presence of UNISFA is absolutely critical to maintaining that general stability. Without the presence of UNISFA, there is still a very real risk of resumption of intercommunal violence. As the Secretary-General has said, the success in keeping relative calm in Abyei and along the border should not be taken as sign that the issues have been resolved. They have not.

The Sudan and South Sudan may have made significant progress towards activating the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). However, little has been done to implement the 20 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area. That includes the failure to form the joint interim institutions that were supposed to be put in place pending the final resolution of the Abyei issue.

Given that reality, it makes sense to consider reconfiguring the mission in order to increase its ability to assist the parties in fully implementing their agreements. That, after all, was the main reason for the deployment of UNISFA in the first place. We appreciate the Secretary-General for taking the initiative in that regard. We share most of the assessments and recommendations in his report.

We agree that the tasks of UNISFA along the border should be aligned and complement what it does in the Abyei box. We consider JBVMM to be intrinsic to the mandate of UNISFA. Indeed, what UNISFA has been able to achieve in maintaining peace and stability in the Abyei Area has much to do with what it does in preventing confrontation along the border through the JBVMM. That should serve as a platform going forward. Altering those arrangements would have serious implications on the ground for wider regional stability.

We also concur with the Secretary-General that the JBVMM remains a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the two countries. There has not been a single confrontation between their armies since the inclusion of the JBVMM as part of UNISFA's mandate in 2012. That is a clear testament to the importance of the operation and functioning of the Mechanism. We would therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendations for the Mechanism to be deployed fully and for the 2012 agreements on security arrangements and the border to be implemented.

However, we do not think that transferring troops from the Abyei box to the JBVMM is the right approach to making the Mechanism fully functional. Reducing the troop levels in the box would have serious implications. We strongly advise that the troop levels remain

unchanged. Additionally, we find it difficult to support the proposal to deploy police forces at the expense of troop levels. Certainly, there is merit in the deployment of police, especially in the absence of the envisaged Abyei Police Service, but we believe that it is premature to reduce troop levels in the box in the absence of the full implementation of the 2012 agreements.

The proposed reinforcement and reconfiguration of the civilian capacity of the mission are certainly timely. The population has high expectations that UNISFA can deliver humanitarian and development assistance now that it has secured the stability of the area. A strengthened civilian component could relieve the troops from taking on additional civilian responsibilities in the absence of basic administrative structures. We strongly support the establishment of a dedicated civilian programme and echo the Secretary-General's call for donors to finance projects focusing on reconciliation and development and tailored to the needs of the two communities.

All of this, I must say, strongly underlines the importance of continuing to engage fully with all relevant stakeholders, particularly the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan. The consent of concerned parties is a basic principle of peacekeeping, and the agreement of both Governments is critical to any adjustment of UNISFA's mission concept. That is all the more important given the unique nature of UNISFA's deployment.

I can say with confidence that UNISFA has become one of our most effective peacekeeping missions. It has made impressive and hard-won gains. Nevertheless, we can all recognize the fragility of the relative stability along the border and in the box. Whatever decisions we take, we should ensure that they do not negate UNISFA's work. We must continue to develop and advance on the basis of the progress already achieved.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan for their valuable briefings.

Today, I would like to discuss three matters regarding the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), namely. the role of the mission, the renewal of its mandate and the nature of that mandate.

First, on the role of the mission, we take note of the proposals of the Secretary-General, contained in his letter dated 20 August (S/2018/778). We recognize the key role of the peacekeeping operation in achieving relative stability in Abyei. We commend the major role played by Ethiopian peacekeepers in bringing about and maintaining stability. UNISFA has become one of the best peacekeeping operations, and we thank Ethiopia for its positive role in that regard. The priority of political solutions must be the Security Council's focus. That can be achieved with the support of peacekeeping operations and in coordination with the host countries.

Secondly, with regard to the renewal of the mission's mandate, we hope that this renewal would be in line with the mission's role and achievements, including the continued work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism which has led to considerably improve the mission's performance.

Pertaining to the technical issues, such as the strength of the mission, the optimal performance of each of its components and their work sites, these are matters that can be discussed by the Security Council in the upcoming weeks in accordance with developments in Abyei.

Concerning bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, there is positive and growing cooperation, which has been welcomed by the neighbouring countries, the League of Arab States, the African Union and the Security Council.

Thirdly, with reference to the nature of the mandate, having taken note this year of the strategic review of the mission and following the adoption of resolution 2416 (2018), any amendment to the mission's mandate must take into account the agreements reached between the two sides on Abyei. Since the approval of the parties is one of the three principles of peacekeeping, and since UNISFA was established on the basis of bilateral understandings in 2011 and 2012, any further step must be taken after consultations between the parties and securing their consent, and not before.

In conclusion, we underscore our determination to pursue consultations with the Sudan and South Sudan in this regard.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the situation in Abyei and the mandate

of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General for its reconfiguration.

We also wish to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, for his briefing.

My delegation will comment on the security and political situation; the implementation of UNISFA support measures for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2412 (2018); and the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the reconfiguration of UNISFA.

On the political front, Côte d'Ivoire notes with regret the meagre progress made in the implementation of the 2012 cooperation agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan. It is our view that, pending the settlement of the final status of the Area and in order to enhance stability and ensure the prosperity and development of the Abyei region, joint institutions must be established in accordance with agreements between the parties on the region and their shared border.

Côte d'Ivoire recognizes the complexity of the political, economic and security situation within each of the two countries. In that regard, we welcome the role played by the Sudanese President in resolving the conflict in South Sudan. However, the stability of the Abyei Area and peace between the two countries remain dependent on the genuine political involvement of the Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders, who should pay due attention to the area given its significance.

On the security front, my country welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei to ensure security and stability in the Area. My delegation also welcomes the efforts of the Interim Force and various United Nations agencies to promote dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts between the various communities living in the area. Nevertheless, as is rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's letter (S/2018/778), the unstable situation in the Area — which remains a source of concern for my country — could deteriorate in the absence of a viable political settlement on the final status of Abyei.

With regard to the implementation of the measures contained in resolution 2412 (2018), Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the continued support by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan for UNISFA air and ground patrols, thereby giving the Force greater freedom of movement in carrying out its mission. My delegation is also pleased to see the resumption of discussions to address issues relating to the demarcation of the shared border. We regret, however, the limited progress made on the resolution of the political issues included in these measures, notably the finalization of the agreement on the three remaining three operating bases of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the holding of meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism.

In this regard, Côte d'Ivoire shares the Secretary-General's view on the need to maintain the support provided by UNISFA to the Mechanism, given the stabilizing role it plays in Abyei. We therefore encourage the authorities of both countries to take advantage of this support and make further efforts to implement the various agreements and measures prescribed by resolution 2412 (2018) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. My country also believes that it is incumbent on the Security Council to urge all parties to become more involved in the expeditious and full implementation of the border agreements and the full operationalization of the Mechanism.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the Government of Ethiopia for its ongoing support in the stabilization of Abyei, and the commitment of UNISFA, whose importance in the area is well established. Its impact in terms of stabilization is undeniable and it has also contributed to the prevention of clashes among local populations, as well as between the respective Sudanese and South Sudanese armed forces for the past seven years. However, it is important that the mandate of UNISFA be adapted not only to reflect the changing situation on the ground but also to enhance its efficiency in implementing its obligations to protect civilian populations.

My delegation therefore takes note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the reconfiguration of the mission's mandate and welcomes his clarifications on the harmonization of the roles to be played by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. We welcome the recommendations for the implementation of specific recovery and development programmes for the people of the Area, in coordination with the United Nations country team.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire will continue to lend our full attention to these recommendations, which will undoubtedly prove enlightening to Council members in their discussions on the renewal of the UNISFA mandate.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their comprehensive updates on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and for their efforts to support the Sudan and South Sudan in settling the outstanding issues between the two countries on Abyei.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations on the adjustment of the UNISFA mandate and would like to share the following observations.

Kazakhstan considers that long-term stability and peace in Abyei can be achieved only through the full implementation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area of June 2011 and the cooperation agreement of September 2012. We note the importance of the work carried out by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel under the leadership of President Mbeki to provide political support to advance implementation of the agreements.

We are worried that, despite the stable security situation, there has been insufficient progress on the final status of Abyei. We therefore support the recommendations of the Secretary-General to enhance the mission's role in the settlement of border disputes and the final status of Abyei, in close collaboration with the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel.

We commend UNISFA for successfully facilitating stability and reconciliation between the two communities and mitigating intercommunal violence in Abyei. We underscore the important role of the UNISFA police component in maintaining law and order through community-based interactive patrols and the capacity-building of community protection committees. UNISFA should continue its negotiations with both sides to establish community protection committees in northern Abyei, as well as to support joint peace committee meetings.

Despite some delays in the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), the two Governments have made important steps towards the full functioning of the Mechanism. We reiterate that the Mechanism plays a critical role in maintaining stability in Abyei and in preventing confrontations along the Sudan-South Sudan border. We therefore generally support the Secretary-General's proposals to make several changes to the UNISFA concept with regard to its military, police and civilian components. At the same time, any decision on such a reconfiguration should be made in discussion and by agreement among the two countries.

We also underscore the importance of the suggestion to foster the nexus between peace and development by implementing programmes that would benefit both communities, and we join the Secretary-General's call on donors to allocate funding for projects that focus on development and reconciliation. We hope that those recommendations will be accepted during the renewal of the UNISFA mandate.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to Special Envoy Haysom and the Ethiopian military contingent for their dedication to and laudable efforts in preserving peace and stability in the Abyei Area, and we assure them of Kazakhstan's full support.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the presidency of the United States for convening today's meeting in this format. It has been a long time since we discussed this topic in an open meeting.

We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for the information that they have shared with the Security Council today.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia agrees with the Secretary-General that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) is one of the most successful peacekeeping missions. We highlight the commitment of its staff and the cooperation of the Government of Ethiopia, which have led to the current state of relative stability in Abyei and along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan.

While we emphasize the stability of the Area, we recognize that the political, humanitarian and security

situation continues to present challenges, to which UNISFA is responding within its means, limited by several factors beyond its control. It is clear to us that it is the Governments of both countries that must advance more in the development of measures to build mutual trust, which would allow for the implementation of the 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area and for identifying the definitive status of the Area.

In that regard, we have taken note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General to adjust the UNISFA mandate. We agree in principle that its objective should be the implementation of the cooperation agreements with respect to border issues, security arrangements and the final status of Abyei, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. Similarly, we agree that it is necessary for UNISFA to reinforce its support for the parties in the implementation of the signed agreements.

We commend the good offices of UNISFA for bringing the parties together and rekindling the political process, as well as promoting understanding and reconciliation between the Dinka Ngok and Misseriya communities by promoting coexistence between them through commercial activities and the creation of community protection committees, helping to establish bonds of trust that are critical to the inhabitants of the area. In particular, we must continue working to further reduce the tensions in the Amiet common market, which, as we know, is the economic centre of the region and allows for the meeting of both parties.

Another important point for my delegation is, undoubtedly, maintaining UNISFA support for the development of the operational capacity of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, which is crucial to maintaining good relations between both countries. Moreover, while emphasizing that UNISFA cannot replace the role of the State, the cooperation of both countries is necessary in consolidating institutions that manage the area properly and can guarantee basic services to the population of Abyei. Likewise, international cooperation is critical to financing projects that meet the needs of the communities of the area, mainly in the areas of reconciliation and development.

We wish to take advantage of the presence of the representative of the Sudan to commend the role that his country has played in the signing of the recent Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and we understand that the process may have delayed the meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. While it is necessary to take such variables into account, we encourage the parties to hold meetings of the Mechanism that could lead to concrete results.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General for the recommendations he has presented. Bolivia supports the extension of the UNISFA mandate while maintaining its operational capacity and support for the Mechanism, as well as continuing to encourage the parties to work together to establish specific measures, as we did in resolution 2386 (2017). Any change to the mission's mandate must first be coordinated with the countries involved and based on consultations with troop-contributing countries and regional and subregional organizations, and take the Secretary-General's recommendations into account.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for their informative briefings.

This meeting comes at an important time for the Sudan and South Sudan. The situation on the ground in Abyei is stable, there are significant improvements in the relations between the two countries and the signing of the peace agreement to revitalize the 2011 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan give rise to hope, even though we are all aware that we should be cautious regarding its implementation. On that point, we must be not only proactive, but also clear-sighted and insistent.

In that regard, I wish to broach two points, first, on the implementation of the requests made by the Security Council concerning border demarcation, and, secondly, on the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the evolution of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

In resolution 2416 (2018), the Council set out clear objectives for the parties regarding border demarcation and, in the light of the facts outlined by Jean-Pierre Lacroix, our clear observation is that the progress made

does not meet our expectations. There has been some progress, in particular the issuance of authorizations for UNISFA patrols and Saturday's meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. However, the overall outcome is disappointing, especially with regard to the establishment of operating bases for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism or the opening of border-crossing corridors.

We are aware of the constraints on the parties. The rainy season is making work difficult and peace efforts in South Sudan have monopolized the mission's efforts. However, we strongly encourage the parties to do more, faster, to make progress on border demarcation. In that context, UNISFA must continue to play a vital role, but the recommendations made by the Secretary-General must allow us to adapt it to the situation on the ground. In that respect, I would like to underline four points.

First, the proposed choice to strengthen the political posture of UNISFA must be supported. Indeed, stabilizing Abyei and the border is essential; that has been a major achievement for UNISFA. However, it is also necessary for UNISFA to contribute more to the political settlement of the Abyei issue and other border disputes. Naturally, UNISFA is in no way a substitute for the work of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel or the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, which we fully support.

Secondly, the proposed scaling up of the police component would respond to the challenge of rising crime in the region. That is a key issue, as we must not allow a culture of impunity to develop, particularly with regard to sexual assault.

Thirdly, the proposed redeployment and overall reduction of the military component are also a move in the right direction. That must be undertaken sensibly in order to preserve the stability of Abyei and the border. The balance that we wish to strike is of course to seek to improve the effectiveness of the Force without running the risk of weakening it or undermining the stability of the region.

Finally, I would like to emphasize relations with local stakeholders and populations. UNISFA must support local initiatives that are useful to the political process. It is important for the country team to be encouraged to develop projects focused on reconciliation and development, in the spirit of and in accordance with the Secretary-General's sustaining peace initiative, which must guide all our actions.

In conclusion, I congratulate and warmly thank the Special Envoy for the excellent work he has done, and wish him much success in his new position.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to first extend our thanks to our briefers for their updates this morning on the situation.

We welcome the fact that the security situation in Abyei has remained relatively calm, while we are aware that the situation still remains unpredictable and tense. The situation could quickly deteriorate and, in that case, have unacceptable consequences for civilians. Also, considering the instability in nearby areas, we very much agree with the Secretary-General that the continued presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remains crucial.

We commend the work of the mission and the Ethiopian troops carrying out that important mandate. Protecting civilians, securing access for humanitarian assistance, mediating migration-based conflicts, facilitating the return of displaced persons and demilitarizing the border region are all tasks that are vital to upholding stability in the Area.

Seven years after UNISFA's creation, we are regrettably no closer to a political solution. The current impasse cannot be allowed to continue, and we must step up efforts to find new ways forward. UNISFA needs to remain part of the path towards the normalization of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan. United Nations efforts should always aim at reaching political solutions, and its mission should be calibrated to advance that objective. That is also true for UNISFA. The implementation of the relevant chapters of the cooperation agreement — namely, border issues and security arrangements, and the settlement of the final status of Abyei — is the end state that needs to be achieved. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to give the mission an augmented role in supporting the political process.

In that context, we also commend the work of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel and UNISFA's cooperation with the Panel must be maintained and further synergies with the efforts of the African Union should be sought.

We share the sense of frustration that the parties have not built on the positive momentum of last spring and carried through the actions that were expected of them. Some efforts have been made and small positive

steps taken, but much more needs to be done to reach a political settlement that addresses the underlying issues. We hope that the recent positive developments in the relations between the Sudan and South Sudan can also contribute to reaching a political solution on the future status of Abyei.

The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVBMM) is a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan, which also contributes to overall stability in the border area. As stated in the Secretary-General's letter (S/2018/778), no single confrontation between the parties' forces has taken place since the inclusion of the JBVMM in the mission's mandate in 2012. We agree that there is a need to push for further progress, rather than risk the gains that have been made.

Furthermore, in the absence of the envisaged temporary institutions, UNISFA has been carrying out crucial tasks in areas that were not foreseen. We particularly commend the work done in addressing sexual and gender-based violence and children's rights. There is a serious governance vacuum, and the mission must be equipped to appropriately address that. It should, for example, have the tools to also support mediation opportunities and address essential law and order issues.

Let me conclude by extending our sincere thanks to Special Envoy Haysom for his relentless engagement and invaluable contribution to that work. His efforts have contributed not only to the issue before us today, but to the whole region. We will miss the clarity and straightforwardness of his briefings, but we also look forward to continuing to closely work with him in his new important role in Somalia.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their excellent briefings.

There are three issues that I will raise today that are of key concern for the Kingdom of the Netherlands: first, the progress on the implementation of the benchmarks, and I was glad that the Under-Secretary-General was so specific about those; secondly, the importance of stability in the region; and thirdly, accountability and the rule of law.

First, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is disappointed by the lack of progress on border demarcation. The majority of the measures set out in resolution 2412 (2018) have not been implemented. We welcome the clearances for patrols. Those are important to facilitating the full freedom of movement for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). But we are still waiting for a number of important steps, and those include the meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism that are supposed to breathe new life into efforts to find a sustainable solution for the Abyei region. The announcement that the Mechanism will convene later this week is encouraging, but we reiterate the need to see concrete progress on the implementation of the benchmarks from resolution 2412 (2018). The Kingdom of the Netherlands expresses appreciation for the recent efforts of the region towards peace in South Sudan, and we are hopeful that this will be a fundamental step towards peace in the region. It thereby has the potential to improve the enabling environment for the JBVMM.

Secondly, I want to emphasize that stability in the region remains our primary objective. The letter of the Secretary-General (S/2018/778) underlines once again the essential role of UNISFA in guaranteeing stability in the Abyei and border areas. The Security Council has a long-standing commitment to peace and security in that region, and it continues to play a role in preventing violence from escalating further. We therefore support the recommendations of the Secretary-General. In particular, we believe that it is important to create a political space as the next step forward. Adding a civilian component to the mission would contribute to that objective.

Thirdly and finally, I would like to stress the importance of the rule of law and accountability for a stable future in Abyei. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the peace/development nexus should be enhanced; in particular, justice and accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened. We see an important role for the United Nations country teams to play in that respect. Criminality is rising in the Abyei region in the absence of domestic security forces. It is vital to build the rule-of-law capacity in local communities. We therefore support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to increase the police component of the mission; in particular, deploying female officers could serve a crucial role. We encourage the Secretary-General to increase his efforts to do so.

In conclusion, recent developments show a mixed picture. On the one hand, there is disappointment over the progress on the benchmarks, and on the other, there have been encouraging developments towards peace in the region. The Abyei border conflict remains unresolved. In the coming weeks, the Council will decide on the way forward for the mission. In doing so, we should all work towards long-term stability in the region.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom — for the information they have shared with us today. Since this is most probably the last time that we are hearing from Special Envoy Haysom in the Council in his current capacity, I would like to convey our appreciation for his hard work and commitment, and wish him all the best in his new assignment in Somalia.

Let me focus my intervention on two points: the current situation in Abyei and the work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

We take note of the relatively stable security situation in Abyei at the moment, but at the same time we recognize the challenges that remain on the political, humanitarian and economic fronts. We note with regret the lack of progress in the political process and the fact that an administrative vacuum still exists in the Abyei Area. The absence of effective formal authorities in Abyei results in limited law enforcement and a lack of good governance and the rule of law. It also hinders the delivery of basic services to the population and in particular affects access to safe drinking water, education and health services.

I would like to emphasize that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the 2011 and 2012 agreements lies with the Governments of both countries. Poland believes that the Security Council should remain unified in its messaging and encourage the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan to swiftly establish the joint mechanisms in their full capabilities, normalize border arrangements and — in the long-term perspective — elaborate a political solution that will lead to lasting peace in Abyei. Let me also stress the need to include women and youth in the ongoing political process. There can be no doubt that the current relative stability in Abyei is a result of the role played by UNISFA. In that regard, Poland would like to commend the efforts of the Ethiopian troops and all of the United Nations personnel in Abyei.

We thank the Secretary-General for his recommendations on how to adjust UNISFA to the current situation in Abyei and the needs of border communities of the Sudan and of South Sudan. We agree that the Interim Force has to be able to meet the needs on the ground. Therefore, UNISFA should stand ready to engage in achieving a political solution in Abyei and to support the implementation of the agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan, in cooperation with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. We believe that the suggested reconfiguration of the mission's tasks should be taken into account by the Council and that further consultations thereon should be held with the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as with the African Union.

Let me conclude by stressing that there can be no other way for the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve the question of Abyei than through dialogue, including intercommunal dialogue and reconciliation, and a genuine political process. UNISFA's presence remains crucial for the stability of Abyei, but it cannot substitute for the role of the State. Poland believes that the Security Council should remain united on this issue and support all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the status of Abyei.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, and the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Haysom, for their briefings.

The situation at present in the Abyei Area is generally stable. There are obvious changes when compared to what prevailed six years ago. China appreciates the efforts of the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan, the African Union (AU), the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the international community.

A few days ago, the parties in South Sudan officially signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which laid an important foundation for ending the conflict and achieving peace in South Sudan. The Agreement also created favourable conditions for further improving relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and for properly settling the Abyei issue. China continues to

believe that a political solution to the Abyei issue is the only way out. The Security Council and the international community should strengthen coordination and provide constructive help.

First, it is important to fully respect the leadership of the Sudan and of South Sudan on the Abyei issue. Those are the countries concerned. Furthermore, the issue cannot be resolved without their cooperation and coordination. The international community should maintain the enthusiasm of the two countries in committing themselves to a political settlement of the Abyei issue, help consolidate their good neighbourly relations, enhance their mutual trust and deepen their pragmatic cooperation in the Abyei Area. Actions contrary to the consensus of the two countries must be avoided.

Secondly, it is important to let the AU and other regional organizations act as the main channel of mediation. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel has long overcome many difficulties, actively carried out good offices and played an important bridging role in achieving reconciliation between the Sudan and South Sudan. The international community should continue to provide the necessary support for the AU to carry out its work.

Thirdly, it is important to support UNISFA's continued delivery of its mandate which, in accordance with the mandate of the Council, has supported the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and has played a key role in stabilizing the border of the Sudan and South Sudan. China supports UNISFA's continued implementation of its mandate, for which China hopes that the international community will provide constructive help. China has noted that the Secretary-General addressed a letter to the Security Council (S/2018/778) a few days ago in which he proposed reorganizing UNISFA and adjusting its mandate in the light of the latest developments. Concerning the relevant recommendations, we hope the Secretary-General will further communicate and coordinate with the Sudanese and South Sudanese Governments, the AU and the relevant troop-contributing countries. We also hope that he will fully heed their views in order to bring into better play the role of the peacekeeping forces and to help advance the proper settlement of the Abyei issue.

China has always attached great importance to peace and development in Africa and has always supported the solution of African issues by African countries and with African methods. China is willing to continue to work with African countries and the international community to contribute to the promotion of peace, stability and development in Africa.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Mr. Nicholas Haysom for their important briefings.

First, we want to highlight the role that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) plays in Abyei in maintaining relative security in the Area and in allowing communities access to humanitarian aid. We believe, however, that it is imperative to revive the political process and fill the governance and administrative vacuum in Abyei. In the light of that, we wish to express our support for the Secretary-General's recommendations for a reconfiguration of the UNISFA mandate. We trust that a more active role for UNISFA in supporting the implementation of the agreements between the Sudan and South South Sudan, and its coordination and cooperation with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, will enable the final objective of the mission and guide Abyei towards the consolidation of sustainable peace.

We deem it appropriate that UNISFA be able to contribute to the resolution of border disputes and, as recommended by the Secretary-General, that it be able to concentrate its military component in the border areas where security threats are greater. In that regard, we must recognize the important role of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to maintain stable relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, and express our concern about how little progress has been made in implementing the measures established by the Council in resolution 2412 (2018).

We hope that the recent developments in the Horn of Africa subregion will provide the necessary impetus to the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan to move forward with concrete measures leading to the resolution of the question of the status of Abyei and the establishment of the common border. At the same time, we think it desirable that UNISFA support the strengthening of institutions that guarantee governance, the rule of law and public order in Abyei. In that sense, we value the recommendation to deploy police units in

the main population centres and specialized agents in all the bases of operations.

In line with the need to address the root causes of the conflict, we hope that the measures recommended by the Secretary-General, such as the creation of a specific programme for the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, will be taken into account to promote development and reconciliation in Abyei.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, for their very informative and enlightening briefings on the reality in the Abyei Area. The inhabitants of Abyei have already suffered for too long. That is why we believe that the current stability in the Area must continue.

Equatorial Guinea welcomes the progress made in fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We therefore support its activities in the Area and consider it a significant factor in ending the conflict that has brought suffering to the inhabitants of Abyei. It is important that the parties refrain from taking actions that could complicate the situation.

However, we are concerned about the internal political tensions, the continuing simmering disputes and the fact that the parties have not made use of the relative calm on their borders to properly address the situation in order to resolve the outstanding issues.

In that regard, we would therefore like to encourage the parties involved — the Sudan and South Sudan — to act responsibly and to implement the measures adopted concerning their borders. I am referring to the Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan signed in September 2012, which has played a stabilizing role in the Area. Without that step, it will be very difficult to strengthen the desired peace in the Area.

Furthermore, in that context the Security Council must play a constructive role in supporting the efforts of UNISFA to fulfil its mandate. We wish to commend its work in facilitating access to humanitarian assistance and its delivery, since there continue to be significant humanitarian needs, which could be exacerbated by the tensions among the communities and the lack of basic services. The two Governments should also cooperate with UNISFA in that regard.

It is important that the mission play a more active and proactive role in support of a political solution to resolve the final status of Abyei, including the implementation by the Sudan and South Sudan of the agreements concluded in 2011 on border issues and security arrangements.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our congratulations to all those that have facilitated the progress in the Abyei Area that we mentioned today, namely, the African Union, UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, which have demonstrated commendable resolve in the pursuit of peace and security in the border area. We urge them to keep up the momentum and the spirit of commitment required in order to implement the agreements to which I referred.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I would also like to thank Special Envoy Mr. Nicholas Haysom both for his briefing and for his excellent work during his tenure to support peace and stability between South Sudan and the Sudan. We look forward to working with him in his new role.

I would like to touch on three issues. First, I would like to talk about the progress that has been made by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and particularly by the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), against the benchmarks set out in resolution 2412 (2018). The United Kingdom welcomes the maintenance of standing clearance for all UNISFA air and ground patrols, along with the support of both Governments for the mission, particularly in ceasing to obstruct the movements of the mission, as we saw in previous reporting periods. However, as the representative of the Netherlands said, the lack of progress against other benchmarks has been disappointing. We urge both Governments to devote their efforts to changing that. Establishing the four remaining JBVMM team sites and holding two meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism must be a priority.

While the efforts of both Governments are essential to progress, we recognize, as Special Envoy Haysom said, that the wider dynamics, including both the commendable focus of the two Governments on the South Sudan peace process and a lack of agreement

among the local communities for the JBVMM team sites, have contributed to the delays. We therefore believe that it is essential, as the representative of France said, that UNISFA and the JBVMM engage the local communities so that their concerns can be considered and their support garnered.

Secondly, let me touch on the Secretary-General's recommendations for UNISFA, which, broadly speaking, we welcome. We support the recommendation to augment the civilian component of UNIFSA, particularly through the deployment of community liaison officers. We also acknowledge the Secretary-General's recommendation to deploy a civilian Deputy Head of Mission. We commend UNIFSA for improving the security situation in Abyei and for reducing the need for a large military presence in the Area. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that the UNIFSA military component concentrate its deployment along the borders of the Abyei Area in the light of the finding that cross-border military action is the most likely threat to security in the Area. Despite the improvements to the security situation, like many other speakers, we are concerned by reports of increased criminality within the Abyei Area and about the continued delays to establish the joint administrative arrangements, including the Abyei police service. We therefore fully support the recommendation to deploy three formed police units to the three major population centres in the Abyei Area.

Thirdly, and finally — again as other speakers have said — only a political settlement can address the underlying causes of the conflict and ensure that long-term stability for the people of Abyei is a reality. It is therefore the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure that the mission is resourced appropriately to support that overarching aim. We very much welcome Special Envoy Haysom's sense of optimism, which I detected, with regard to the fact that the Sudan and South Sudan are now more willing and more able to make progress on the political track. I look forward to hearing from the representatives of both those countries today as to how they intend to do that. Of course, they will have our full support.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for their substantive briefings.

We believe that the continuation of the joint efforts of the parties, including the political dialogue at the highest level, are key to the successful progress of the intra-Sudanese peace process. The basis for cooperation between Khartoum and Juba exists, namely, the bilateral agreements concluded in September 2012 in Addis Ababa, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We welcome the improvement recently noted in the relations between the two Sudans. We pay tribute to the effective participation of Khartoum in the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to revitalize the South Sudanese Peace Agreement.

We note the efforts of the African Union and its High-level Implementation Panel under the leadership of Mr. Thabo Mbeki. We hope that the Panel will continue to be an important mechanism for promoting the normalization of relations between the two countries.

We note with satisfaction the generally stable situation in Abyei, as well as the constructive relations of the personnel of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNIFSA) with the local inhabitants and the measures taken by UNIFSA to prevent intercommunal clashes.

Among the positive aspects, we would also like to highlight the periodic holding of meetings of peace committees with representatives of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. We welcome the fact that law enforcement and economic matters are addressed at such events. It is important that the Amiet common market is slowly becoming the economic hub not only for Abyei but for the region as a whole. We are convinced that it has contributed to strengthening trust and reconciliation between the two communities.

We regret that not all of the provisions of the inter-Sudanese Agreement of 20 June 2011 are being implemented. A power vacuum remains in the Area. The demilitarized status of Abyei and the buffer zone along the inter-Sudanese border is being violated. We would like to see increased regular contact between the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan.

With regard to the enhanced Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), we welcome the progress made by the parties in fulfilling their obligations to make it fully operational. We believe that the JBVMM is an important element in preventing

incidents between the two parties. We continue to believe that scaling back UNISFA support for the Mechanism could completely paralyse the structure and have a negative impact on the prospects for a full resolution to the situation in Abyei. Guided by that, we supported the adoption of resolution 2412 (2018), which extended the UNISFA mandate by six months. We will be ready to support a similar extension in October.

We took note of the letter of the Secretary-General (S/2018/778), which includes proposals on reconfiguring UNISFA. We believe that the issue must be carefully addressed and examined. We understand that there is little progress being made in resolving the Abyei dispute. We note that a whole range of factors has prevented Khartoum and Juba from demonstrating the flexibility required to resolve the final status of Abyei. In that regard, UNISFA plays a very important role in maintaining stability in the region. Once again, we would like to recall that UNISFA is operating within the confines of traditional peacekeeping, in which the parties to the conflict are States. When making decisions on reconfiguring the Mission, it is important to be guided by the basic principles of peacekeeping. We believe that the changes proposed by the Secretariat with regard to strengthening the civilian component and changing the mandate and personnel ceiling of the mission must first be supported by both Khartoum and Juba. We must also take into account the views of the troop-contributing countries. If not, the effect of the reconfiguration could be the exact opposite of what is intended.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and for the explanation of the recommendations for the reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). I also thank Special Envoy Haysom for his briefing. Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude for all of his contributions as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan. We are sorry to lose his skills and knowledge on the portfolio but we wish him the best of luck in his next role with the United Nations in Somalia.

The United States appreciates UNISFA's successful work to stabilize Abyei, and specifically commends Ethiopia for its contributions. The mission's efforts to stabilize the Area and to work with local communities to strengthen ties, resolve disputes and increase peace and security have greatly contributed to the general calm in the contested Area between the Sudan and South Sudan. It is now time to ensure that we can reconfigure the mission to reflect the new realities on the ground and better address its existing security and administrative concerns, as the Council unanimously endorsed in the recent mandate renewal.

Our analysis of the Secretary-General's reconfiguration recommendations is that they are a good start to align UNISFA with realities on the ground, but they do not go far enough. We believe that significant security gains in recent years warrant a reduction in the overall number of uniformed personnel in the mission. The improved security situation in the Abyei Area and other border areas no longer demands the current level of military personnel. Thanks to the firm benchmarks established by the Council, there has been some progress in the past year to operationalize the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). However, the parties have not met all of the benchmarks outlined by the Council, as other speakers have pointed out.

More than half a decade since its creation, the JBVMM has still not realized its full potential. We regret the fact that the parties have not convened a Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting and that progress on other benchmarks appear stalled. We urge the parties to take steps to meet the benchmarks laid out in resolution 2412 (2018) before the deadline of 15 October. The Security Council should not, and the United States will not, indefinitely support a Mechanism that remains underutilized and is not making progress on resolving the political issues at the root of UNISFA's JBVMM support mandate, especially if the parties are unwilling to fully commit to the political process and disregard Security Council benchmarks.

We agree with the Secretary-General that a reorientation towards a police-style mission is necessary in order to solidify the peace and stability that the Ethiopian peacekeepers have worked so hard to secure. The establishment of the Abyei police service and the provision of a full-spectrum police service remain essential steps in maintaining stability, while also enabling UNISFA's eventual withdrawal. We agree with the Secretary-General that a strong civilian component is necessary for UNISFA to operate effectively and create the space to resolve underlying political issues. The civilian component would assist

both sides and all communities in maintaining stability, preventing intercommunal conflict and implementing past agreements. We appreciate the role of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in facilitating the settlement of the Abyei dispute. We urge the Panel to continue its mediation efforts to reach an agreement on Abyei's final status and to continue encouraging the parties to implement past agreements.

In missions that generally work well, such as UNISFA, we must give credit where it is due. Therefore, I thank Ethiopia and others that provide personnel and resources to the mission. However, we must think critically about efficiently managing our scarce resources and applying them appropriately to the tasks at hand. We must also question whether or not all of those tasks remain appropriate and necessary. Peacekeeping missions, even ones that generally work well, must have exit strategies and adapt to the changing circumstances and realities of the situation on the ground. For UNISFA, it means a reconfiguration towards realistic police and troop allocations, a strong civilian presence and renewed commitment by the parties to finding a permanent solution to the outstanding issues.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): We are delighted to report to the Security Council for the second time under your presidency, Sir. We would like to recognize Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their briefings. We would also like to wish Mr. Haysom the best of luck in his new assignment.

On behalf of our Government, we welcome the Secretary-General's letter regarding the reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the situation in the Abyei Area (S/2018/778). The proposals the Secretary-General is recommending have been well received by the Dinka Ngok. I hope that the Council was able to read the letter of the Ngok Dinka chiefdoms, which we sent to it yesterday.

While we welcome the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General, we would like to express our concerns regarding the proposed migration police liaising with the resident Misseriya community in the Abyei Area, because, in the long run, that practice may legitimize illegal residency and further occupation of Dinka lands, which continue to discourage the return of Ngok Dinka internally displaced persons to their rightful lands.

Regarding the benchmarks, our Government is still committed to engaging the Government of the Sudan to work together with it to achieve the benchmarks. However, as the Council may know, for technical reasons, the two sides have not been able to meet regularly, especially while the region was preoccupied with the revitalized Peace Agreement negotiations. But we are now reliably informed, that a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism is scheduled to take place on 23 and 24 September in Addis Ababa.

With regard to resolution 2416 (2018), my delegation would like to propose a way of implementing paragraph 6. Members may recall that paragraph 6 instructs the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to update the Security Council on progress made by the parties on the implementation of the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area and on progress made on the settlement of the final status and two other issues. Since the parties have not been meeting consistently, we would like to propose that the parties directly update the Security Council, jointly or individually.

In conclusion, if it seems that there has been relative peace in the Abyei areas in recent years, it is because, to quote from the letter of the Dinka Ngok chiefs,

> "We fully agree that UNISFA has performed quite well over the past seven years of its presence in the Abyei Area. It has practically averted further confrontation between the Sudan and South Sudan, particularly over Abyei. Furthermore, we believe that the proposed adjustments to the UNISFA mandate will add more dimensions to a sustainable peace across borders and between communities interacting within the Abyei box".

Therefore, to enhance the current UNISFA force level with the proposed police element would be a prudent and wise decision on the part of the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, the Representative of the United Kingdom, on her efforts

while assuming the presidency of the Council last month. I want as well to assure you of the full cooperation of my country's delegation with you.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate the commitment of my country to cooperate with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) so that it can fulfil its mandate pursuant to resolution 1990 (2011). I also thank the Secretary-General for his report to the Security Council (S/2018/778), as well as Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I also would like to wish Special Envoy Haysom every success in his new post.

We should not forget the positive, and even the ideal, circumstances that made it possible to successfully conclude an agreement in July 2011 on the final status of Abyei. That was a direct result of the full commitment to the right to self-determination of South Sudan, which was the basis of the 2005 comprehensive Peace Agreement. That Agreement was an international negotiated one that led to a commitment to strengthening the points of convergence among the two sisterly countries and to avoid the use of any non-peaceful means.

We agreed at the time that we are one people in two States. We believe in the moral obligation as well as the legal commitment to respect the Abyei Agreement, which also addresses the final status of this integral part of the Sudanese territory. I would like to underscore that the stability and security currently prevailing in Abyei and the significant progress being made in terms of coexistence between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, as documented in the report recently presented to the Council, are the direct outcome of efforts deployed by the Government and the communities, as well as the positive role played by UNISFA since its establishment.

Wisdom dictates the need for cooperation among all partners to further consolidate security and stability. It likewise requires that the parties distance themselves from any actions or decisions that could undermine that stability before the final legal status of Abyei is determined. Until then, Abyei is an integral part of Sudanese territory, and the Sudanese Government exercises full sovereignty over that territory.

I wish to recall what the members of the Security Council asserted last year, namely, that achieving security and stability in Abyei is a feat in itself, and that should be preserved and further strengthened.

The Government of the Sudan took note of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and expressed its reservations on some of them because they are in contravention of the 20 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, which is the basis of all arrangements regarding Abyei, including the deployment of UNISFA. Indeed, the two parties to the Agreement — that is, the Government of the Sudan and the People's Liberation Movement of Sudan, which later became the Government of South Sudan — remain bound by that Agreement until the final status of Abyei is determined.

I wish to quote from article 41:

> "This Agreement and the Abyei Protocol (except as modified by the terms herein) shall continue to apply until such time as the final status of Abyei has been resolved."

I would also like to recall article 29 of the same Agreement, which links any amendment in the UNISFA mandate to the consent of both parties to the Agreement. That Article reads as follows:

> "The Government of Sudan and the SPLM will request the United Nations Security Council to approve the deployment and mandate of the ISFA, with the understanding that the mandate referred to in paragraph 27 of this Agreement shall not be changed without agreement of the Government of Sudan, the SPLM and the Government of Ethiopia."

My country's Government underscores its commitment to implementing all the agreements reached with the Republic of South Sudan, beginning with the 2004 Protocol on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Abyei Area, the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area and the 27 September 2012 agreement on bilateral cooperation. We call on our brothers and sisters in the Government of South Sudan to cooperate meaningfully with the Government of the Sudan and the African Union in order to accelerate the setting up of institutions in Abyei pursuant to the Agreement of June 2011. That would make it possible to resolve the final status of Abyei. Those institutions include a joint administration in Abyei, a joint legislative council and a joint police service. We all agree that those institutions are essential and indispensable for administering the

Area and establishing peace, providing basic services to the population, strengthening coexistence among the various communities and creating the appropriate, required and necessary conditions towards resolving Abyei's final status, so as to meet the aspirations of all stakeholders within a setting that is acceptable to all.

Allow me to reiterate the need to consider the issue of Abyei as part of the overall relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, taking into account the developments in the internal situations of the two countries. My country's delegation hopes that the latest developments will make it possible to strengthen bilateral relations and address the pending issues, at the top of which is the issue of Abyei, especially given that the Sudan has hosted peace negotiations between the South Sudanese parties and exerted tireless efforts, with the recognition of the Security Council, which on 12 September led to the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

In conclusion, allow me once again to thank all our partners who have endeavoured to facilitate the work of UNISFA, in particular the Government of the sisterly Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission, the High-level Implementation Panel, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan and the staff of UNISFA, along with the Secretariat. I also reiterate the Sudan's commitment to continue working with UNISFA in order to allow it to carry out all its tasks. I support what Mr. Lacroix and certain members of the Council have said, namely, about the importance of holding more consultations in order to strengthen the existing positive situation and promote our collective determination on the issue.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.